

Parashat Re'eh 5774, 2014

*“You Are Children of the L-rd, Your G-d.”*

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yecheiel, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, Chaim Mordechai Hakohen ben Natan Yitzchak, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shmuel David ben Moshe Halevy, Avraham Yechezkel ben Yaakov Halevy, and the refuah shlaimah of Yosef Shmuel ben Miriam, Devorah bat Chana, and Yitzhak Akiva ben Malka, and to the safety of the soldiers of Tzahal in their holy mission to protect the Jewish people.

Following the depressing and dreary period of the Three Weeks and Tisha b'Av, we are met with a phrase in this week's *parasha* that engenders hope for a better future: “You are children of the L-rd, your G-d.” (*Sefer Devarim* 14:1, this and all Bible translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*) One of the best-known homiletical interpretations of our phrase is found in *Pirkei Avot* III:14:

He [Rabbi Akiva] would also say: “Beloved is man, for he was created in the image [of G-d]; it is a sign of even greater love that it has been made known to him that he was created in the image, as it is says, ‘For in the image of G-d, He made man.’” [*Sefer Bereishit* 9:6]

Beloved are Israel, for they are called children of G-d; it is a sign of even greater love that it has been made known to them that they are called children of G-d, as it is stated: “You are children of the L-rd your G-d.” [*Sefer Devarim* 14:1]

Beloved are Israel, for they were given a precious article; it is a sign of even greater love that it has been made known to them that they were given a precious article, as it is stated: “I have given you a good purchase; My Torah, do not forsake it.” [*Sefer Mishle* 4:2]

There are three distinct elements contained in these famous statements by Rabbi Akiva:

1. Man as man (i.e. universally) is beloved by the Holy One Blessed be He, since he was created in His divine image.
2. The Jewish people have been singled out for Hashem's special love since only we are called “children of the L-rd, your G-d.”
3. Since we enjoy this singular relationship with the Almighty, He saw fit to give us His most precious gift – the Torah.

This idea is further expanded upon in the *Avot d'Rabbi Natan*, a Rabbinic work that often parallels the *mishnaiot* found in *Pirkei Avot*. As such, the 44<sup>th</sup> chapter of this work also discusses man's beloved nature, and the exceptional love Hashem has for the Jewish people, as evidenced by His having given us the Torah.

The Jewish people are called "children," as the Torah states: "You are children of the L-rd, your G-d." (*Sefer Devarim* 14:1) And the Ministering Angels are also called "children," as the text states: "Now the day came about, and the children of G-d (*b'nai Elokim*, i.e. the Angels) came to stand beside the L-rd, and the Adversary, too, came among them." (*Sefer Iyov* 1:6) As a result, you do not know which group is more beloved before the Almighty – man or the Angels? Therefore the Torah states: "So said the L-rd, 'My firstborn son is Israel.'" (*Sefer Shemot* 4:22) Jewish people! You are more beloved before Me than even the Ministering Angels! (*Avot d'Rabbi Natan*, Version II, Chapter 44, translation, brackets, and explanatory emendations my own)

Amazingly enough, while the Ministering Angels are indubitably Hashem's children and, therefore, beloved by Him, G-d's most ardent and passionate love is solely reserved for the Jewish people! We are now uniquely positioned to understand the words of the blessing that precede the recitation of *Shema Yisrael*: "*habochoer b'amo Yisrael b'ahavah*" ("He who chose His people Israel in love.") G-d's love for the Jewish people is forever and unchanging. This, then, is precisely why He chose us "from all the nations of the world" (Festival Kiddush).

With Hashem's help, may we find comfort, solace and inspiration in the words, "You are children of the L-rd, your G-d," and may we strive with all our being to be worthy of His special love. *V'chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

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The email list, *b'chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email [rdbe718@gmail.com](mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com).

\*\*\* My audio *shiurim* for Women on “*Tefilah: Haskafah and Analysis*,” may be found at:  
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